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William Newsom, 84, California Judge and Governor-Elect's Father, Dies

By The Associated Press

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William Newsom III, a former California judge and environmental advocate and the father of California's governor-elect, Gavin Newsom, died on Wednesday at his home in San Francisco. He was 84.

His death, less than a month before his son is scheduled to be sworn in as California's 40th governor, was announced by Nathan Click, a spokesman for Gavin Newsom, who did not specify the cause.

Judge Newsom was appointed to the Placer County Superior Court in 1975, and to the State Court of Appeals in 1978, by Gov. Jerry Brown, who was serving the first of his four terms at the time. (Governor Brown originally served from 1975 to 1983. He was elected again in 2010 and re-elected in 2014.)

Judge Newsom retired in 1995.

A staunch advocate of environmental protection, Judge Newsom served on the boards of the Sierra Club Foundation and the Environmental Defense Fund. Carl Pope, a former executive director of the Sierra Club, said Judge Newsom had occasionally been restricted in his environmental advocacy while serving as a judge.

During his run for governor, Gavin Newsom, a former mayor of San Francisco, spoke of his memories of camping and backpacking along California's rivers with his father. He also said his father had helped shape his views on drug policy and racial justice. When Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, was sworn in as mayor in 2004, his father administered the oath of office.

On the court of appeals, Judge Newsom ruled on a diverse array of cases, including the right of privacy for H.I.V.-positive health care patients and the liability of the San Francisco 49ers over a player's crippling knee injury. In one prominent case, he ruled that the Bohemian Club, a prestigious men's club that counted Ronald Reagan as a member, could not enforce a ban on hiring women.

Judge Newsom was a close friend of the oil magnate Gordon Getty and helped manage his finances. During Gavin Newsom's campaign, critics painted him as a son of wealth and privilege because of his connections to the Getty family.

In addition to his son, Judge Newsom is survived by a daughter, Hilary Newsom Callan. His marriage to Tessa Menzies ended in divorce.

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